

VZCZCXRO5866
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKB #1362/01 3181205
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141205Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4250
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2462
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0715
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001362

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH PRESIDENT GUL RECEIVES WARM WELCOME IN BAKU

Classified By: CDA Donald Lu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkish President Abdullah Gul's November 6-8 visit to Azerbaijan highlighted strong cooperation and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey. President Aliyev and President Gul's statements focused on broadening bilateral cooperation, resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, supporting Turkey against the PKK, and calling on Turkmenistan to become part of a trans-Caspian energy corridor. The Turkish DCM said that Ankara's goal for the visit was to increase economic cooperation, while emphasizing the "special relationship" between the two countries. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Local press was upbeat about Turkish President Abdullah Gul's November 6-8 visit to Azerbaijan. Press coverage of the visit focused on the strong bonds between the two Turkic neighbors, highlighting their cooperation in regional energy and transportation projects, namely pipelines and the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railroad. While in Baku, Gul met with a range of GOAJ officials -- including President Aliyev, Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, and Parliamentary Speaker Oktay Asadov -- and attended a Azerbaijani-Turkish business forum. Gul also traveled to Azerbaijan's second largest city, Ganja, on November 8.

¶3. (SBU) The visit's public message focused on Azerbaijani-Turkish cooperation and solidarity. During a joint Aliyev-Gul press conference, Aliyev said "Turkey is Azerbaijan's biggest partner and friend," while Gul stated that the common parlance of "interests, benefit, and balance of power" do not capture the substance of the bilateral relationship. Gul noted, "In brotherhood, there are no interests, no enmities." The visit resulted in four agreements and a broader political declaration. Gul offered Turkish support on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of territorial conflict, while Aliyev offered declaratory support to Turkey's struggle against the PKK. Gul also publicly called on Ashgabat to participate in a trans-Caspian energy corridor.

¶4. (C) Turkish DCM Erkhan Ozural told the DCM on November 9 that this was Gul's first bilateral foreign visit, and the impetus for the visit came from both sides, although President Aliyev had invited Gul to Baku after Gul was elected in August. Striking upon the theme of a "special relationship" between Turkey and Azerbaijan, Ozural said the relationship was a "real brotherhood," and not a mere bilateral relationship. Ozural said the agreements pertained

to cooperation in the spheres of economy, education, women and gender equality, and youth and sport. Commenting on the visit's substance, Ozural said the main purpose was to promote economic cooperation and that Turkey and Azerbaijan already has a number of agreements and the accords were "not anything new." In response to the DCM's question, Ozural dismissed the rumor that the GOAJ is uncomfortable with the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Islamic orientation.

¶5. (C) Local political analyst Rasim Musabayov told us the visit primarily was important at a symbolic level. Musabayov suggested the visit's key purpose was to showcase that bilateral relations remain strong, even with a new Turkish President. Musabayov judged the bilateral accords largely were boilerplate calls for cooperation, vice new areas of substantive cooperation.

¶6. (C) Comment: The theme of a special Turkic bond between Azerbaijan and Turkey resonates within Azerbaijani society. Substantively, the two states' shared economic and geographic interests bind the relationship. There are chinks in the armor of Turkic solidarity, however. Local contacts repeatedly tell us the substance of the bilateral relationship does not match the carefully scripted public spin between the two countries. Ankara and Baku are still bickering about the details surrounding Azerbaijani Shah Deniz gas transiting Turkey. Economic relations are not as strong as some might think. According to GOAJ statistics, Turkey is Azerbaijan's third largest trading partner, with distant Italy and neighboring Russia holding the first and second slots, respectively. As a final example, the Norwegian Charge in Yerevan recently confirmed press reports that Turkish trucks send a large volume of goods to the Armenia, despite Turkish public statements supporting

BAKU 00001362 002 OF 002

Azerbaijan's position on the NK conflict vis-a-vis
Azerbaijan.
LU